



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

**The Center for Empowerment
and Education**
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic
Abuse**
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA**
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services**
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Willimantic, CT

Testimony Supporting

HB 5355, AAC Sexual Violence Posting in the Workplace

SB 312, AAC the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days

Labor & Public Employees Committee March 8, 2022

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, housing advocacy and resources, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

House Bill 5355

House Bill 5355 is one of CCADV's priority bills. It seeks to require that all state employees view a one-hour virtual training developed by the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), in conjunction with CCADV, regarding domestic violence. Such training would include information concerning domestic violence, abuser and victim behaviors, how domestic violence may impact the workplace and the resources available to victims. The bill also requires all employers with three or more employees to post information about domestic violence and the resources available to victims. This too would be developed by CHRO, in conjunction with CCADV, and made available on the Commission's website.

The emotional and physical impact of domestic violence on a victim is often significant and can impact every aspect of their daily life, including their ability to focus and be productive at work. An analysis of 2012 U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention data estimates that U.S. adults experience 741 million lost days of work because of victimizations by an average of 2.5 perpetrators per survivor. A 2018 national survey of survivors found that 83% of respondents reported that their abusive partners disrupted their ability to work, and of those individuals, 53% said they lost a job because of the abuse. Forty-nine percent (49%) said they missed one or more days of work, 18% missed out on a promotion or raise, and 38% said they lost out on other work opportunities.

The violence can also impact other employees at the company. According to Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence, approximately 24% of workplace violence is related to personal relationships. This involves situations where an individual gains access to a workplace and commits a crime targeting an employee or customer who is a current or former intimate partner. Stalking, disruptive phone calls, and general threats can all take a toll on a victim's co-workers and impact company productivity.

One of the top predictors of whether a victim will leave an abusive relationship is the victim's ability to financially support her or himself and their children. Understanding the impact that domestic violence can have on a victim's ability to maintain employment is important for understanding why some choose to stay and what a significant role employers can play. Victims sometimes lose their jobs because of absences or related job performance issues, yet in order to address the abuse and keep themselves and their kids safe, victims may need time to attend court appearances, obtain legal or medical assistance, and find a new place to live, among other needs. Lack of supportive

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workplace policies may result in victims losing their job, making them even more financially dependent on their abuser and likely to remain in the relationship.

Employers can and should play an important role in protecting their employees by creating a workplace culture of support and resilience. Work may be the only safe place for a survivor and a prime opportunity for help-seeking from supervisors or co-workers. It is critical for employers and employees to be knowledgeable about domestic violence and what help is available if an employee ever discloses abuse.

Domestic violence is a widespread and far-reaching issue that impacts millions of Americans. While it knows no gender, socioeconomic or religious boundaries, it disproportionately impacts women, in particular women of color. By increasing awareness about domestic violence and the free resources available across Connecticut at CCADV's 18 member organizations, the proposed one-hour virtual training will benefit the safety of state employees, both those experiencing abuse at home and those who may be exposed if the abuse enters the workplace. It will offer state agency leadership best practices for creating a workplace culture that fosters support and resilience and makes employees feel safe asking for help. And requiring most employers to post information about domestic violence resources will serve as a simple, cost-effective method for saving potentially millions of dollars in lost productivity.

We look forward to partnering with CHRO on this important initiative and urge the Committee's support.

Senate Bill 312

Senate Bill 312 seeks to update Connecticut's existing paid sick days law to cover all workers, regardless of their job title or the size of their employer. It also makes important changes to remove the law's 680 hour waiting period before a worker can use the paid sick leave they've accrued and aligns the law's definition of family member with our state's paid family and medical leave program, which allows workers to take paid sick days to care for their chosen family members.

As the state continues to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, access to paid sick days is more critical than ever. Paid sick days are critical to essential workers, including domestic workers. The majority of domestic and essential workers are women and people of color and are least likely to have access to paid sick days right now as they continue to work on the frontlines of the crisis. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to either go to work sick or miss their paycheck. In some cases, they may lose their job entirely. For survivors of domestic violence, missing a paycheck or losing their job will make them more financially dependent on their abuser and less able to leave and financially support themselves.

Another critical change for survivors of domestic violence is the inclusion of language allowing family members to use paid sick days to support them when seeking medical or psychological care, obtaining services from a victim services organization, relocating due to family violence or sexual assault or participating in any civil or criminal proceedings. The physical and mental toll of domestic violence cannot be overstated and the support of a loved one when dealing with the aftermath can strengthen outcomes and stability for survivors and their children.

Paid sick leave is also a critical racial justice issue - workers of color are overrepresented in industries that do not provide paid sick days and are far more likely to lack access to the benefit than white workers. Pre-pandemic, low-wage workers and workers of color were already less likely than higher wage and white workers to have access to paid sick leave, but this gap is even more dangerous and harmful during the COVID-19 crisis. Women and people of color are overrepresented in frontline jobs that carry greater risk of exposure to the virus but continue to lack critical support like paid sick leave. Communities of color have faced the most severe economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Inequality in access to paid sick leave only deepens the harm and economic injustice. This includes for survivors of domestic violence, which disproportionately impacts women of color.

We urge the Committee's support. Thank you for your consideration.

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